

HMC Aspiring Heads' Programme (AHP)

Briefing for Mentors of AHP participants

The role of the mentor

The role of the mentor is to provide individual, confidential support to participants on the HMC Aspiring Heads' Programme. An overview of the programme can be found [here](#). The mentor should draw on their own experience of headship to offer professional advice and guidance, whilst also inviting reflection by the participant. Mentors will normally be the participant's current head. In the event that this is not possible, the participant should make their own mentor arrangements, perhaps under the guidance of their head.

Mentor meetings

Participants in the programme should arrange six meetings with their head-mentor, and it is the responsibility of the participant to arrange those meetings and to ensure they come to the meeting prepared, having briefed the mentor ahead of the meeting about what they need to cover. The initial meeting should take place before October half term, and meetings are then likely to be every half-term for the rest of the academic year (i.e. the duration of the programme). Face-to-face meetings would be the norm but online or telephone mentoring is also possible and may well be more suitable if a mentor is based in a different location from the participant. If travel is necessary, the participant or their current school should meet the cost of travel expenses.

The suggested topics for the meetings are linked to module content and to tasks in the portfolio so it may be beneficial for mentors to make themselves familiar with the portfolio content although it is the responsibility of the participant to brief the mentor about the tasks and topics they need to cover. A copy of the portfolio can be accessed [here](#). Participants are given particular topics to explore with their mentor at each meeting, alongside any additional topics they wish to raise. Suggested areas of discussion for each meeting are listed below:

Mentor meeting 1: Initial general discussion then: the opportunities and challenges of headship; advice on the headship application process, including the role of governors and professional search firms.

Mentor meeting 2: Vision and direction; strategic thinking; relationships with governors; the external context and current demands and strategies.

Mentor meeting 3: Finance; legal and HR issues; inspection.

Mentor meeting 4: Leading Teaching and Learning; the wider curriculum; pastoral care and safeguarding.

Mentor meeting 5: Relationships with parents and the wider community; partnerships; facing unexpected challenges.

Mentor meeting 6: What has been learnt during the programme, forward planning and next steps.

Shadowing

As well as being mentored by their current Head, participants are asked to spend two days shadowing a head in another independent school. Mentors have an important part to play in supporting the participant in setting this up. It is unlikely to be appropriate for the school visited to be a direct competitor school, but it is clearly helpful if the school chosen is reasonably geographically close. As with the mentoring, if travel is necessary, the participant or their current school, rather than HMC, should meet the cost of the travel expenses.

The school might be one which educates a different age range from the participant's own school. Other HMC schools with which partnership arrangements are already in existence would be especially suitable. After the shadowing has taken place, mentors should encourage discussion of the visit in the next mentor meeting.

Mentor's supporting statement

Mentors are asked to provide a short supporting statement in the participant's portfolio at the end of the programme. This should be fewer than 200 words and should include comment on the progress of the participant during the programme as well as areas for future development. Participants will ask you for a supporting statement as they near the end of the programme.

Please contact pd@hmc.org.uk if we can be of assistance or provide any further information about the shadowing visits.